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ABSTRACT

A case study analyzed a special event, AmeriFlora '92, held from April 1992 to October 1992 in Columbus, Ohio. AmeriFlora '92 was established as a temporary organization covering nearly 8 years of planning, operations, and dismantling. The lack of attendance and the resulting financial impact inspired a major effort to examine the role of public relations in this international cultural, entertainment, and floral exposition. The focus of the study on public relations functions was also examined in terms of PR's relationship to marketing and advertising (particularly the lack of integrative communication) and most significantly, how reflective these findings are in terms of the communication model(s) described in the literature. Results suggest the need to examine the preparedness of public relations professionals for integrated communication and leadership roles in an organization, especially under conflict situations. Results further indicate the impact of publics on an organization and thus illustrate the ineffectiveness of both the one-way and two-way communication models. Findings suggest the need for adapting a multicultural communication model, especially when the potential for conflict exists. Contains 13 references. (Author/SR)

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THE NEED FOR INTEGRATIVE COMMUNICATION WITHIN A MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION MODEL: A CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS FUNCTIONS AND LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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The research project was supervised by Dr. Neff under a special projects course in public relations and the undergraduate students assisting in the data gathering included: Eric Bardenhagen, Mary Ann Capparelli, Sydney Dawson, Joe Edwards, Tiffany Ewert, Phil Drager, Matthew Felder, Matt Fifolt, Jack Holley, Laurie Horlock, Kristina Huseth, Jim Jablonski, Lisa Key, Kim Klausmeier, Kirsten Knueppel, David Moll, Lori Nelson, Tama Norman, Deborah Paun, Erin Reiter, Jody Tyvela, Wendy Wulf

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The results suggest the need to examine the preparedness of public relations professionals for integrated communication and leadership roles in an organization, especially under conflict situations. The results further indicate the impact of publics on an organization and thus illustrates the ineffectiveness of both the one-way and two-way communication models. The results suggest the need for adapting a multicultural communication model, especially when the potential for conflict is possible.

THE NEED FOR INTEGRATIVE COMMUNICATION WITHIN A MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION MODEL: A CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS FUNCTIONS AND LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Analyzing the functions and leadership role of pubic relations is the nexus of understanding the degree of effectiveness of special events. Examining public relations in terms of both the organizational and external publics focuses the analysis on the preparedness of professionals for integrated communication and for functioning under communication models more suitable for multicultural environs. Both areas of concern were examined by reviewing the 8-year temporary life of an organization created for AmeriFlora '92--an international cultural, entertainment, and horticultural exposition held in Columbus, Ohio.

Special events are big business. Holding a special event can mean attracting matching monies for community development both in terms of physical facilities as well as support for the event per se. Special events can be a primary tourist attraction and, in turn, improve the image of an urban area or environment. There are attractive reasons for holding a special event (Lainson, 1). And by examining the functions and leadership role of the public relations professional, this analysis provides further evidence of the importance of integrative communication within a multiculturally sensitive communication model--a philosophical purview critical to successful conduct of a special event for community development.

Public Relations Role in Integrative Communication

Currently the hotbed of controversy is integrated marketing. The pros and cons were presented at AEJMC's annual meeting of the Public Relations division in Kansas City, August 1993. The presentation is to be recapped at the Speech Communication Association's annual meeting of the Commission on Public Relations in Miami, November 1993.

Despite the vociferous statements for both sides, the position here is that in basic principle both sides are supportive of integrated communication. The actually debate is--Are public relations professionals prepared for integrative communication efforts? Here lies the

nexus of the problem. For some nonsupporters of public relations, the belief is that few public relations professionals are prepared to interact with marketing and advertising. There are several reasons for this situation and include the following:

1. Public relations professionals vary greatly in their perception of the communication role of public relations. Many still come from the journalistic publicity emphasis and are limited in skills and perspective. Broom, Lauzen, and Tucker note that the panelist of national leaders in marketing and public relations see that the problem is continuing. For example.

> a. Yet another generation of managers is being educated who do not understand how public relations contributes to organizational success.
> b. Yet another generation of public relations practitioners is being educated who are unable to fulfill the management function.
> c. There is a vacillation between marketing and public relations because the two functions are not understood by either mangers or practitioners.
> d. CEO's do not know how to utilize the respective strengths of public relation and marketing to achieve organizational missions. (Broom, Lauzen, Tucker, 225)

2. Public relations professionals generally, regardless of training, are not prepared for the leadership role either philosophically or skilled in processing communication (negotiation, conflict resolution, decision making, problem solving, etc.)

3. The public relations professionals are often not given the managerial role. Often underpaid, the less qualified professional (usually female) is hired. By dismissing public relations as serving a critical function, the chance for change is even less possible. Public relation is viewed often by operations (those in administration, finance, engineering, etc) as basically a nonessential item in the budget. Thus public relations budgets are often the first to be cut.

The issue of marketing encroachment on public relations is not discussed here because much of the fault lies with public relations in not preparing the professionals to handle integrative communication (Lauzen 245-255).

Public Relations Functions

There has been much research and discussion on the functions in public relations (Crable and Vibbert, 31-35). The greater concern is how these functions define or create a perception about the public relations role. If the functions of a public relations professional are primarily of writing and graphics, the professional is perceived as a technician. If the public relations professional is supervising employees, the function is managerial. The most complex and influential set of functions are those belonging to leadership. The importance of noting this third area is succinctly summed up in the statement: "one does not chose a good manager for leadership positions." Yet the latter set of functions is rarely discussed in the public relations literature.

The functions that a professional comes equipped with is the best source of information about roles within systems. Obviously the managerial role is the preferred status according to the literature (White & Dozier, 91). The public relations professional is viewed here as part of management and thus involved in both decision making and strategic planning.

A Multiculturally Sensitive Communication Model

Practitioners generally are not aware of the communication model they are practicing (Repper, 111). Communication models describe communication flow. And although these models only describe the process and are not predictive, the description does assist in clarifying the role of the professional.

However, the literature in public relations is not effective in reflecting the variety of research in this area. Models of communication from public relations have largely ignored, distorted or have perpetrated myths about communication models.

Areas of Agreement. These two models seem to be clearly described in most of the literature. The press agentry/publicity and the public information model are are generally accepted descriptions of the communication process. Both of these models focus on the one-way communication process.

Areas of Difference. It is in the two-way communication process that disagreement prevails. Here the primary models focus on scientific promotion (advertising), persuasion-argumentation, and understanding.

If you come from a speech communication background, the persuasion-argumentation is a rich description of the communication process which includes ethos, pathos, and logos. The sender and receiver are tied together in terms of the feedback mechanism (never has a rhetorical model excluded feedback). Others from the journalism background argue that persuasion is one-way communication tool and there are some implications that this approach is not as ethical. Generally, this reflects a lack of background in the rhetorical theory and a disdain for persuasion due to the journalistic, objective-view, training approach. So the above discussion on the two-way models reflects the whole of the literature on persuasion and reflects its primary origins in rhetorical theory.

The understanding model is distinctly a journalistic-based idea applied and adapted to communication. Similar to a skilled reporter, the objectivity is tested when the receiver clearly "understands" what is being communicated.

Areas Not Represented. Conflict resolution professionals, negotiators, labor arbitrators, community conflict resolution leaders in the field need resolutions or at least decisions. Understanding among all parties is not crucial to the outcome. For example, the Better Business Bureau negotiations simply have cases adjudicated by volunteers. The two parties agree to accept the decision as binding. Each presents their case. There may or may not be questions asked. Understanding is not important to all parties in order to reach closure. To bring the conflict to a close and accept a settlement avoids court costs and court delays. Obviously this is a different dimension of the communication process operating here.

Here the distinction between persuasion and understanding is stated very clearly under circumstances where conflict is contained. Experienced negotiators and arbitrators have emphatically stated that their role cannot involve persuasion (John "Sam" Keltner, 1987). This recognition of another means than persuasion by expert arbitrators and adjudicators for the Better Business Bureau strongly suggests conflict resolution has a quality that demands a possibility beyond a simple two-way flow of communication.

There needs to be a new level for opening possibilities and opportunities.

There needs to be a model of communication which is operating not just on a two-way flow of communication but working between what is known and what is not known. There has to be a commitment to life on a larger scale then just the feedback of assurance that someone is giving an answer. There has to be a commitment from the source that takes in a appreciation of life beyond what one just understands.

Beyond Two-Way Models--The Multicultural Approach. Casmir examines 3rd culture building in his article "Third-Culture Building: A Paradigm Shift for International and Intercultural Communication" (Casmir, 407). Here individual needs are factored into the third culture as an overlay to the performance or actions as reflected through communication (Casmir, 421-423). The stress is on the individual human experiences and needs". Neff similarly discusses synergy as a relational model for public relations activity. Neff notes:

> In sum, synergism shifts the purpose of communication from information exchange, persuasion-argumentation, or mutual understanding to a process orientation--the opening of possibilities by sourcing, sharing, or observing. The shift emphases less the need for understanding or persuasion-argumentation to more of a 'what is' attitude for each person and exists in the interpretative domain (Neff, 8).

When more central control is suggested, Casmir notes that the 3rd party intervener (often the public relations professional) produces third-culture building that "can become negative by destroying the essence of one or both parties through pressure or duress" (Casmir, 422). Casmir's table outlines these roles below and note how these roles relate to the professional activity of public relations practitioners.

So the individuals way of communication is imposed over the third-culture building process and the "fit" stresses "developing their own frameworks, value systems, and communication systems for the purposes of survival, mutual growth, and enjoyment of the life experience" (Casmir, 420).

Obviously the support for a new paradigm in public relations is particularly important because of the increased multicultural growth within the United States. The question at point is actually an issue of the diffusion of power in our society -- a major battle ground for community development. Public relations can assist greatly if the community development process if these professionals are trained in terms of a multicultural communication model.

Methodology

AmeriFlora '92--A Case Study

The testing of these areas of concern grew out of a visit to a special event. It was not my choice. I was simply chaperoning a professional singing-dance troupe around the North American continent. My daughter had just finished dancing with the troupe on a cruise ship in Caribbean and in Mexico. AmeriFlora '92 was a post-trip, add-on performance. I was not pleased. What was this AmeriFlora? Why here after such a successful North American tour.

There was no intention of having an opportunity to test some of my hypotheses about communication, particularly the role of public relations, until I stepped into the entrance of AmeriFlora. The pristine beauty and creativity hit me so intensely that the first thought that came to me was -- Why didn't I know about this? On a bench near the entrance was listed the many hours that went into the creation of AmeriFlora. Public relations was never mentioned. My curiosity was intense. I spent two days researching AmeriFlora. Stunned to find out this was only a 6-month, one-time event (88 acres of Disney-type creativity) and that the area would be leveled and turned back into a neighborhood park after October. I returned back to the university with names, addresses and a special projects course outlined to investigate the mystery of AmeriFlora '92. The special projects class in public relations, a total of 22 students,

spent the spring of '92 developing the case study on AmeriFlora. The research took place not only through speakers visiting campus, but the students travelled down to Columbus and spent 2 days reviewing the archives of AmeriFlora '92 which were housed at the Ohio Historical Society and being briefed by former projects directors in public relations, finance, and architecture. The questions developed included:

Q1 What were the functions of the public relations professionals?

Q2 What role did public relations play with management?

Q3 What role did public relations have with other areas--marketing and advertising? In other words, to what degree was interactive marketing practiced?

Q4 What communication model best fit AmeriFlora '92?

Q5 How effective was the diffusion of information?

Q6 How central was the concept of "power" to the development of AmeriFlora?

To answer these proposed questions, the research effort focused on gathering all public information available on Ameriflora (listing available in Appendix). Then the organizational internal and external communication documents were discovered, deposited although not yet cataloged, at the Ohio Historical Society. This included public relations agencies news clippings books and copies of video PSA's and VNR's.

To supplement this data, especially for the students to recreate the essence of the AmeriFlora experience, arrangements were made to tour the grounds of AmeriFlora, meet with the architectural firm, meet with the former public relations director, finance director, and through telephone calls be briefed by the marketing director. A leader in the Columbus community, the religious sector, came to campus and presented a lecture on the community perspective during the 6-month AmeriFlora experience. The following description of AmeriFlora is provided because the research effort revealed few people really understood AmeriFlora and many had not heard about it.

What is AmeriFlora '92? AmeriFlora was born in 1980 when John Reiner and the late Mel Dodge came up with an idea to hold an extravagant flower show in Columbus, Ohio. This flower show was meant to be like the international expo, only held in the United States for the

first time. From here on, many events occurred that affected AmeriFlora to grow beyond a flower shoe to an international cultural, floral, and entertainment experience.

In 1985, during the planning of Ameriflora, Ohio's top horticulturist John Peterson was called in to help set up foreign interest in AmeriFlora. In 1990 when final decision had been to locate AmeriFlora in Franklin Park, the selected site for AmeriFlora '92 was closed to the community and was walled in for renovation.

1991 was a busy year for Ameriflora. To begin with, Borden Dairy, Coca-cola USA and Coca-Cola Bottling company of Northern Ohio and xerox corporation are signed on as corporate sponsors and suppliers. A few months later, in November, Franks Nursery and Crafts is designated as the official garden center of AmeriFlora. Also in November, Disney becomes an integral part of the AmeriFlora plan. In December of 1991, Richard M. Franks, the chairman of AmeriFlora terminated the contract with the consultant arranging sponsor support and Management Resources from Tustin, California took over (former Disney executives).

In April of 1992, AmeriFlora opened its doors to welcome ticketholders. The same day, Floraide, an international flower expo in Holland also began. AmeriFlora wasn't open very long when a massive freeze hit Columbus causing a panic among the growers and the management of AmeriFlora. This resulted in lowered attendance for AmeriFlora in the beginning, but this was not the only natural disaster to cause great concern for AmeriFlora. The month of July brought massive rains. With the attendance affected by the elements, the unfortunate image as a flower show, and little publicity on the new direction (strictly floral to expanded emphasis on culture and entertainment), AmeriFlora's ticket sales fell short (2.1 million attended but 4 million were expected) of their goal. However, local corporate guarantees made up for the lost revenue.

Rumors of debt, poor attendance, community protests, and the general lack of information overshadowed what was truly a world class event. On the last opening day, October 12th, AmeriFlora celebrated the Age of Discovery on Columbus Day. For those hearing about AmeriFlora during the student's interviews, the most frequently asked questions is--"Will they have an AmeriFlora in 1993?" AmeriFlora was a one-time event and many people wish now they had not missed the experience.

Results

H1 The functions of the public relations professional related to those of a technician level.

Val Pastore, the former on-site public relations representative, was primarily focused on publicity regarding the media and such events as press conferences. With the public relations budget slashed greatly and turnover in personnel evident, Ms. Pastore was the last employed person in public relations, although supervised by an outside consultant, while AmeriFlora was operating. A relatively new professional, her previous experience was a position in tourism. Very energetic, Val's background training was primarily in journalism.

The newspaper clippings analysis (several volumes of clippings from public relations agencies) were primarily from the period around the opening date of AmeriFlora. A review of these clipping revealed that the definition of AmeriFlora remained narrowly cast as a flower show despite managerial decisions to expand the expo to a cultural and entertainment attraction. Again evidence that management was not including the public relations professional in the decision making. Most of the news items gave the opening date. The news clips revealed favorable press coverage, although limited in terms of information and time period.

The video news clips were not as positive about AmeriFlora. This probably reflects the lack of control one has over the broadcast media. It also reflected a conflict between the primary newspaper, the Columbus Dispatch, which was the first AmeriFlora corporate sponsor and the local broadcasting owner who was opposed to AmeriFlora. Indeed a media war was going on. This reflected a long standing animosity between two families that own the print and broadcast media. Major coverage often ignored AmeriFlora and was only presented as the site for broadcasting and not featured in the story. Ignoring AmeriFlora during onsite broadcast further blinded the viewer to the immensity and richness of offerings at AmeriFlora.

Pastore's job essentially was news releases and obtaining news coverage. Although 700,000 impressions were created, rarely did these impressions hit big media sources. Often articles would end up in a flower magazine, a magazine with limited outreach.

Research instruments were designed to conduct a content analysis on the news releases and video clips.

H2 Public relations was excluded from management planning and decision-making.

The public relations output did not reflect management decisions. Therefore, it would seem logical to conclude that public relations was not part of the management team. This was further confirmed at a seminar by the finance and architect directors who stated that there was a "Field of Dreams" approach to AmeriFlora. Build this magnificent park and the people will come (obviously public relations was not critical to the plan). However, there were several intervening factors and included a) local, negative perceptions about Columbus and not believing quality international events possible, b) local people not having been part of the decision making process resented the disruption in their lives, especially the secrecy of the building process, and c) the lack of public relations resulted in a confusing image and the failure to reach markets relatively unaware about Columbus. Unbelievably, a large number of people never heard about AmeriFlora and even a larger number could only define AmeriFlora as a local flower show--a concept that did not seem appealing to travelers.

H3 Public relations was not integrated with marketing and advertising.

Interviews reveals that the public relations staffs and marketings staffs (no advertising department) never meet together until an independent consultant was called in (former Disney employee) and suggested this should be happening. Relatively late in the process, actually June of 1993 when AmeriFlora was already open for 2 months, the first

meetings of the two departments began. However, at this point, especially with the narrow definition of the role of public relations as publicity, it was an uphill battle to coordinate efforts. The number one claim to success was being named by the National Bus Association as the primary destination for the tourist in 1992. However, chartered bus travelers are white senior citizens. This also reinforced the image of AmeriFlora as a garden show for older people. Pastore also stated that the young college student was never targeted as an audience for AmeriFlora. This seems strange since thousands of college students live in the city of Columbus. Even more confusing in light of the fact that our surveys established some of the entertainment did appeal to the college students. However, the incredible size of AmeriFlora (88 acres) made the excursion overwhelming for the chartered bus riders. Plus the Disney-type trams were not operating daily on the grounds to ease the long walks. As a consequence, some of the very major exhibits and activities in the back of the park were missed. Plus a number of people interviewed (nearly 400 respondents representing residents of Columbus, college students and noncollege people outside the public relations publicity reach, and communication professionals from throughout the Midwest) believed they had seen all the park and never realized they had missed most of the sites.

H4 AmeriFlora personnel practiced one-way communication.

It may seem misleading to state that AmeriFlora activity was captured in a one-way communication model. But the initial "Field of Dreams" approach further reinforced the attitude that public relations was a very small factor in the success of the project. Two-way persuasion and understanding were initiated later and after AmeriFlora experienced major problems--poor attendance and heavy local resentment about the heavy handedness of AmeriFlora officials, especially with the people of color who lived around the Franklin Park site of AmeriFlora. The understanding stage, primarily post-AmeriFlora left many of the project directors bitter and enraged and did little to heal relationships. Reaching out with an olive branch does not work, despite the fact that two-way communication is practiced. The synergistic model or creative communication was never approached. To be fair, no one at AmeriFlora had been trained in multicultural communication and groups had been

excluded from the planning process. There is much healing that needs to take place in this community and other future projects will be endangered unless this process takes place.

H5 The public relations department never evaluated the diffusion of information factor.

The communication of the concept and/or image of AmeriFlora never met the standards for successful diffusion of an idea. To quote an assessment of the outreach effort:

> E.M. Roger's theory of communication, the Diffusion of Innovations, states that for an event or idea to gain acceptance - the idea must be embedded in a crucial 5 per cent of the population. But persuading this 5 per cent required reaching 50 per cent of the population with publicity oriented communication (Center & Jackson, 267-268)

The two major ideas of Roger's rate of adoption theory is how one perceives the new ideas as better than what one presently experiences and if the idea really is aligned with their present interests. AmeriFlora never reached this stage because a large number of people never heard about AmeriFlora. For those that had, AmeriFlora remained a local flower show and in comparison to what was available for summer entertainment--not the choice destination for the summer. Plus AmeriFlora's publicity remained focused on the concept of a flower show. The lack of an image to match what AmeriFlora could offer killed off attendance before people had a chance to even consider the idea. All of this plus "additional misinformation from an unclear, ever-changing definition of the event, poor initial publicity, undefined event goals, and frequent turnover of personnel" further discouraged potential interest.

H6 The lack of a multicultural model resulted in a power struggle--a standoff between the people of color and Ameriflora which represented primarily the white leadership.

The "power" struggle in the community led to the demise of the project on many levels--fragile community relations jeopardizes future projects, reinforces negative concept of

Columbus as a city that cannot be a cultural center, further hinders citizens from viewing AmeriFlora as a success, and a sense of financial loss (although not verified).

This is particularly important why the multicultural sensitive model must be part of the public relations professionals training. Especially since the AmeriFlora leadership now recognizes public relations professionals as important to the success of a community project.

Summary

Though a case study approach, the impact of a major international cultural entertainment, and horticultural exposition was studied. The analysis was developed first from interviews, content analysis of the Ohio Historical Society archives of video and audio cassette tapes and agency news clippings books on AmeriFlora. Next, surveys were conducted to further establish the perceptions and reactions to AmeriFlora '92. Surveys were conducted (210 respondents) with people outside of the target media reach or 250 miles away from Columbus. Another survey of students from Ohio (22 respondents) focused on the student awareness level. A telephone survey of Columbus residents (63 respondents) established the local perceptions and reactions. A sample of 94 respondents representing professionals in communication from the Midwest tested the awareness of the media watchers. A survey of the horticulturists having exhibits at AmeriFlora provided an onsite perspective.

The key variables examined were the functions and role of the public relations professionals working with AmeriFlora. The communication models practiced by those running Ameriflora (interviews with both the operations and communications directors) was the second major focus of the study. The results confirmed the hypotheses proposed.

The functions of the public relations professional (H1) was primarily focused on media relations. News releases and video releases were the primary concerns of the newly hired public relations director. The primary evaluation component was the large number of impressions (700,000) in terms of printed pieces and broadcast items. The content of what was released was not scrutinized in any way.

The public relations professional (H2) was not involved in the planning process. Initially because of the "Field of Dreams" belief and later after attendance problems were evident and

two months after AmeriFlora was open to the public--public relations was coordinated with marketing efforts (advertising subsumed under marketing). However, (H3) the integration of communication did not seem to affect the individual roles and public relations remained a media oriented effort.

Because of the "Field of Dreams" approach by operations (H4), AmeriFlora personnel practiced a one-way communication model. The one-way model was not even checked in terms of the "diffusion of information" theory (H5). Even feedback from evaluation was ignored.

Until major community pressures developed and only then did the operations director move to a two-way communication approach. The results were very disappointing and much resentment remains today in the community. The lack of a multicultural communication model was evident. This failure led to the emerging issue (H5) of the power struggle over the diffusion of power. Research indicates that the public relations professional is often in the roles that are cited as the facilitators for building a third culture.

The case study indicates there is much misinformation about the importance of the public relations professional in organizations, particularly in terms of community development. Specific recommendations went to the community after the case study was completed. The recommendations also suggest that the public relations professionals need more training and need to assume more of a leadership role, especially when conflict resolution among a diverse group is a critical factor.

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